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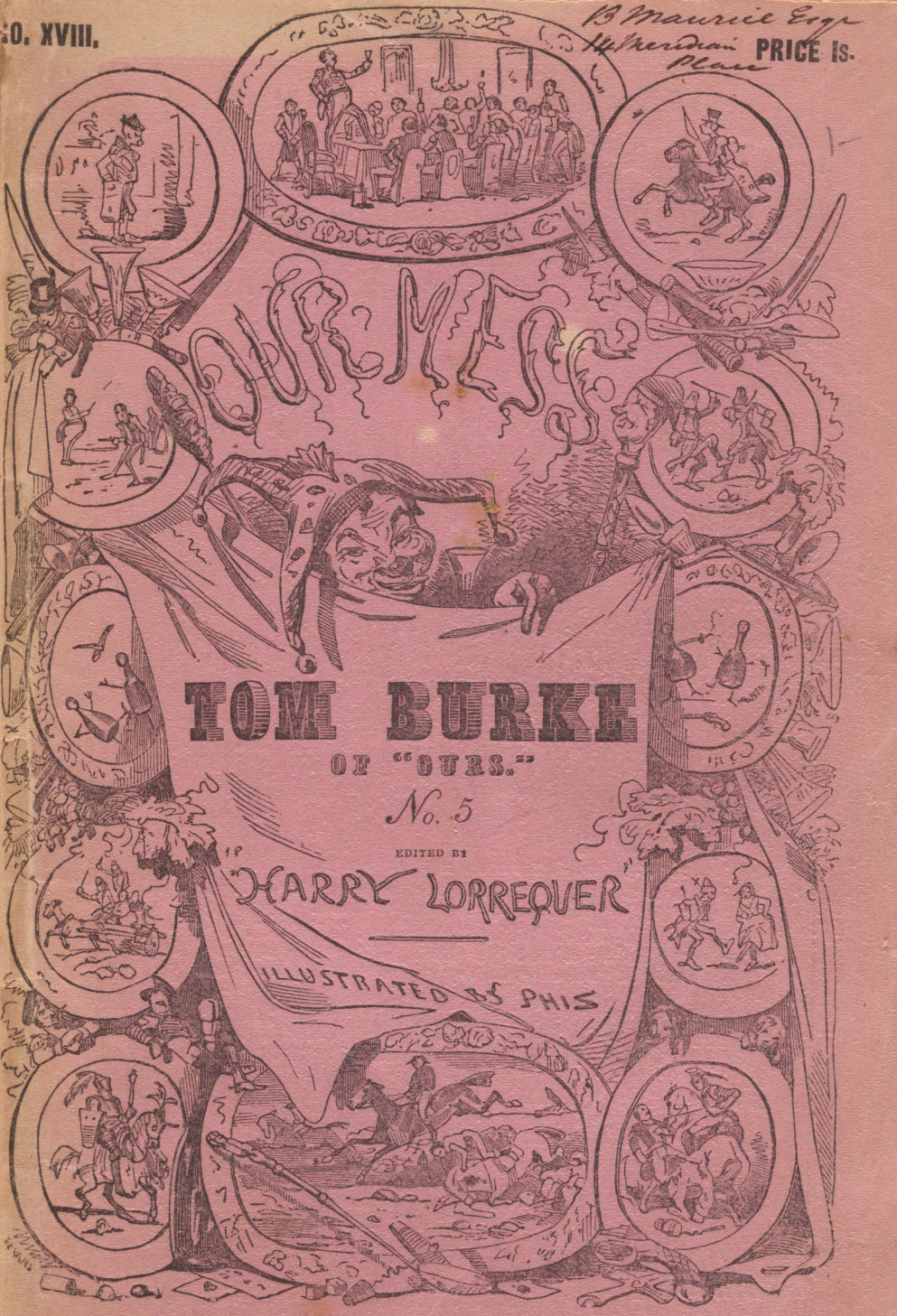

TOM BURKE

OF "OURS."

No. 5

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE QUARREL.

WHILE I stood gazing at the uncouth and ragged figure before me, she pushed rudely past, and, shutting the door behind her, asked in a low whisper, "are ye alone?" and then, without waiting for a reply, threw back the tattered bonnet that covered her head, and, removing a wig of long black hair, stared steadfastly at me.

"Do you know me now?" said the hag, in a voice of almost menacing eagerness.

"What!" cried I, in amazement, "it surely cannot be——Darby, is this really you?"

"Ye may well say it," replied he bitterly. "Ye had time enough to forget me since we met last; and 'tis thinking twice your grand friends the officers would be, before they'd put their necks where mine is now to see you. Read that"—as he spoke he threw a ragged and torn piece of printed paper on the table—"read that; and you'll see there's five hundred pounds of blood-money to the man that takes me. Ay, and here I stand this minit in the king's barrack, and walked fifty-four miles this blessed day just to see you and speak to you once more.—Well, well," he turned away his head while he said this, and wiping a starting tear from his red eye-ball, he added—"Master Tom, 'tis myself would never b'lieve ye done it."

"Did what?" said I, eagerly: "what have I ever done that you should charge me thus?"

But Darby heard me not: his eyes were fixed on vacancy, and his lips moved rapidly as though he were speaking to himself. "Ay," said he half aloud, "true enough, 'tis the gentlemen that betrayed us always—never came good of the cause where they took a part. But you"—here he turned full round, and grasping my arm, spoke directly to me—"you that I loved better than my own kith and kin, that I thought would one day be a pride and glory to us all—you that I brought over myself to the cause——"

"And when have I deserted—when have I betrayed it?"

"When did you desert it?" repeated he, in a tone of mocking irony. "Tell me the day and the hour ye came here—tell me the first time ye sat down among the red butchers of King George, and I'll answer ye that. Is it here you ought to be? Is this the home for him that has a heart for Ireland? I never said you betrayed us; others said it—but I stood to it, ye never did that. But what does it signify? 'Tis no wonder ye left us; we were poor and humble people, we had nothing at heart but the good cause——"

"Stop," cried I, maddened by his taunts—"what could I have done? where was my place?"

"Don't ask me. If your own heart doesn't teach ye, how can I? But it's over now—the day is gone, and I must take to the road again. My heart is lighter since I seen you, and it will be lighter again when I give you this warnin'—God knows if you'll mind it:—you think yourself safe now since you joined the sodgers—you'd think they trust you, and that Barton's eye isn't on ye still—there isn't a word you say isn't noted down—not a man you spake to, isn't watched! You don't know it, but I know it. There's more go to the gallows in Ireland over their wine, than with the pike in their hands. Take care of your friends, I say."

"You wrong them, Darby, and you wrong me. Never have I heard from one here a single word that could offend the proudest heart among us."

"Why would they—what need of it; ar'n't we down, down—ar'n't we hunted like wild beasts; is the roof left to shelter us; dare we walk the roads; dare we say 'God save ye' when we meet, and not be tried for pass-words? It's no wonder they pity us—the hardest heart must melt sometimes."

"As to myself," said I, for there was no use in attempting to reason with him further, "my every wish is with the cause as warmly as on the day we parted; but I look to France——"

"Ay, and why not? I remember the time your eye flashed and your cheek grew another colour when you spoke of that."

"Yes, Darby," said I, after a pause, "and I had not been here now, but that the only means I possessed of forwarding myself in the French service are unfortunately lost to me."

"And what was that?" interrupted he eagerly.

"Some letters which the poor Captain de Meudon gave me," said I, endeavouring to seem as much at ease as I could. Darby stooped down as I spoke, and ripping open the lining of his cloak, produced a small parcel fastened with a cord saying—

"Are these what you mean?"

I opened it with a trembling hand, and, to my inexpressible delight, discovered Charles's letter to the head of the *école militaire*, together with a letter of credit, and two checks on his banker. The note to his sister was not, however, among them.

"How came you by these, Darby?" inquired I, eagerly.

"I found them on the road Barton travelled the same evening you made your escape from the yeomanry—you remember that—they were soon missed, and an orderly was sent back to search for them. Since that I've kept them by me, and it was only yesterday that I thought of bringing them to you, thinking you might know something about them."

"There's a mark on this one," said I, still gazing on the paper in my hand—"it looks like blood."

"If it is, it's mine then," said Darby, doggedly, and after a pause he continued—"the soldier galloped up the very minute I was stoop-

ing for the papers; he called out to me to give them up, but I pretended not to hear, and took a long look round to see what way I could escape where his horse couldn't follow me; but he saw what I was at, and the same instant his sabre was in my shoulder, and the blood running hot down my arm—I fell on my knees, but if I did, I took this from my breast," here he drew forth a long-barrelled rusty pistol, "and shot him through the neck."

"Was he killed?" said I, in horror at the coolness of the recital.

"Sorrow one o' me knows.—He fell on his horse's mane, and I saw the beast gallop with him up the road with his arms hanging at each side of the neck; and then I heard a crash, and I saw that he was down, and the horse was dragging him by the stirrup; but the dust soon hid him from my sight, and indeed I was growing weak too, so I crept into the bushes until it was dark, and then got down to Glencree."

The easy indifference with which he spoke, the tone of coolness in which he narrated this circumstance, thrilled through me far more painfully than the most passionate description; and I stood gazing on him with a feeling of dread, that unhappily my features but too plainly indicated. He seemed to know what was passing in my mind, and, as if stung by what he deemed my ingratitude for the service he rendered me, his face grew darkly red, the swollen veins stood out thick and knotted in his forehead, his livid lips quivered, and he said in a thick guttural voice—

"Maybe ye think I murdered him?" And then as I made no answer, he resumed in a different tone—"And, faix, ye warn't long larnin' their lessons. But hear me now—there never was a traitor to the cause had a happy life, or an easy death; there never was one betrayed us, but we were revenged on him or his. I don't think ye're come to *that* yet; for if I did, by the mortial——" As he pronounced the last word, in a tone of the fiercest menace, the sounds of many voices talking without, and the noise of a key turning in the lock, broke in upon our colloquy; and Darby had barely time to resume his disguise when Bubbleton entered, followed by three of his brother officers, all speaking together, and in accents that evidently betokened their having drank somewhat freely.

"I tell you, again and again, the diamond wins it; but here we are," cried Bubbleton, "and now for a pack of cards, and let's decide the thing at once."

"You said you'd bet fifty, I think," drawled out Crofts, who was unquestionably the most sober of the party——"but what have we here?" At this instant his eye fell upon Darby, who had quietly ensconced himself behind the door, and hoped to escape unseen. "Eh—what's this, I say?"

"What!" cried Bubbleton, "what do I see; a nymph with bright and flowing hair—a hag like Hecuba, by Jove! Tom Burke, my man, how comes the damsel here?"

"'Tis Kitty, ould Kitty Cole, your honour. The young gentleman was buying a ballad from me, the heavens prosper him," said Darby.

"Nothing treasonous, I hope—no disloyal effusion Tom—no scandal about Queen Elizabeth, my boy—eh?"

"Come, old lady," said Cradock, "let's have the latest novelty of the Liberty."

"Yes," said Bubbleton, "strike the harp in praise of——confound the word."

"Hang the old crone," broke in Hilliard: "here are the cards. The game stands thus:—a spade is led—you've got none—hearts are trumps."

"No, you mistake, the diamond's the trump," said Cradock.

"I cry halt," said Crofts, holding up both his hands; "the first thing is, what's the bet?"

"Any thing you like," cried Bubbleton, "fifty—a hundred—five hundred."

"Be it then five hundred; I take you," said Crofts, coolly, taking a memorandum-book from his pocket.

"No, no," interposed Hilliard, "Bubbleton, you shan't do any such thing; five—ten—twenty, if you wish, but I'll not stand by at such a wager."

"Well, then, if twenty be as much as you have got permission to bet," replied Crofts, insolently, "there's *my* stake;" so saying, he threw a note on the table, and looked over at Bubbleton, as if awaiting his doing the same.

I saw my poor friend's embarrassment, and, without stirring from my place, slipped a note into his hand in silence; a squeeze of his fingers replied to me, and the same instant he threw the crumpled piece of paper down, and cried out, "Now for it—decide the point."

Crofts at once drew his chair to the table, and began with the utmost coolness to arrange the cards; while the others, deeply interested in the point at issue, looked on without speaking. I thought this a good opportunity for Darby to effect his escape, and, raising my hand noiselessly, I pointed to the door. Darby, who had been only waiting for the fortunate moment, stole quietly towards it; but, while his hand was on the lock, Crofts lifted his eyes towards me, and then throwing them half round, intimated at once that he observed the manœuvre. The blood suffused my face and temples, and though I saw the door close behind the piper, I could not recover from my embarrassment, or the fear that pressed on me, lest Crofts should have penetrated the secret of Darby's disguise, and augured from the fact something to my discredit.

"The game is now arranged," said he. "The spade being led here, the second player follows suit, the third having none—trump's the card, and is overtrumped by the last in play; the trick is lost, therefore, and, with it, the game."

"No, no," interrupted Bubbleton, "you mistake altogether; the diamond—no, the heart; I mean the—the—what the deuce is it? I say, Cradock, I had it all correct a minute ago—how is it, old fellow?"

"Why you've lost, that's all," said the other, as he looked intently on the table, and seemed to consider the point.

"Yes, Bubbleton, there's no doubt about it—you've lost—we forgot all about the last player," said Hilliard.

A violent knocking at the outer door drowned the voices of all within, while a gruff voice shouted out—

"Captain Bubbleton, the grand round is coming up Parliament-street."

Bubbleton snatched up his sword, and dashing through the room, was followed by the others in a roar of laughter. Crofts alone remaining behind, proceeded leisurely to open the folded piece of bank paper that lay before him, while I stood opposite unable to take my eyes from him. Slowly unfolding the note, he flattened it with his hand, and then proceeded to read aloud—"*Payez au porteur la somme de deux mille livres*——"

"I beg pardon," interrupted I, "there's a mistake there—that belongs to me."

"I thought as much," replied Crofts, with a very peculiar smile—"I scarcely supposed my friend Bubbleton had gone so far."

"There's the sum, sir," said I, endeavouring to control my temper, and only eager to regain possession of what would at once have compromised me, if discovered. "This is what Captain Bubbleton lost—twenty pounds if I mistake not."

"I must entreat your pardon, sir," said Crofts, folding up the French *billet de banque*. "My wager was not with you, nor can I permit you to pay it. This is at present *my* property, and remains so until Captain Bubbleton demands it of me."

I was struck dumb by the manner in which these words were spoken. It was clear to me, that not only he suspected the disguise of the ballad-singer, but that by the discovery of the French note he connected his presence with its being in my possession. Rousing myself for the effort, I said—"You force me, sir, to speak of what nothing short of the circumstance could have induced me to allude to. It was I gave Captain Bubbleton that note. I gave it in a mistake, for this one."

"I guessed as much, sir," was the cool answer of Crofts, as he placed the note in his pocket-book and clasped it; "but I cannot permit your candid explanation to alter the determination I have already come to—even had I not the stronger motive, which as an officer in his majesty's pay I possess, to inform the government on such infallible evidence, how deeply interested our French neighbours are in our welfare when they supply us with a commodity, which report says is scarce enough among themselves."

"Do not suppose, sir, that your threat—for as such I understand it—has any terror for me: there is, it's true, another whose safety might be compromised by any step you might take in this affair; but when I tell you, that it is one who never did, never could have injured you, and moreover, that nothing treasonous or disloyal lies beneath your discovery——"

"You are really taking a vast deal of trouble, Mr. Burke," said he, stopping me with a cold smile; "which I am forced to say is unneces-

sary. Your explanation of how this *billet de banque* came into your possession may be required elsewhere, and will, I am certain, meet with every respect and attention. As for me, an humble captain, with only one principle to sustain me, one clue to guide me in what I am disposed to consider a question of some importance, I shall certainly ask advice of others better able to direct me."

"You refuse, then, sir, to restore me what I have assured you is mine?"

"And what I have no doubt whatever you are correct in calling so," added he, contemptuously.

"And you persist in the refusal?" said I, in a voice which unhappily betrayed more temper than I had yet shown.

"Even so, sir," said he, moving towards the door.

"In that case," said I, springing before him, and setting my back against it, "you don't leave this room until, in the presence of a third party, I care not who he be, I have told you somewhat more of my opinion of you than it is necessary I should say now." The insulting expression of Croft's features changed suddenly as I spoke, the colour left his cheek, and he became as pale as death; his eye wandered round the room with an uncertain look, and then was fixed steadfastly on the door, against which I stood firmly planted. At length his face recovered its wonted character, and he said in a cool, distinct manner—

"Your difficulties have made you bold, sir."

"Not more bold than you'll find me whenever you think fit to call on me; but perhaps I am wrong for suggesting a test, which report at least says Captain Crofts has little predilection for."

"Insolent cub," said he, half drawing his sword from the scabbard, and as hastily replacing it when he perceived that I never moved a muscle in my defence, but stood as if inviting his attack. "Let me pass, sir," cried he impetuously—"stand by this instant."

I made no reply, but crossing my arms on my breast stared at him firmly as before; he had now advanced within a foot of me, his face purple with passion and his hands trembling with rage.

"Let me pass I say," shouted he, in an accent that boded his passion had completely got the ascendant, at the same instant he seized me by the collar, and, fixing his grip firmly in my clothes, prepared to hurl me from the spot. The moment had now come that for some minutes past I had been expecting, and with my open hand I struck him on the cheek, but so powerfully, that he reeled back with the stroke. A yell of rage burst from him, and in an instant his sword leaped from the scabbard, and he darted fiercely at me. I sprung to one side, and the weapon pierced the door and broke off short; still more than half the blade remained; and with this he flew towards me. One quick glance I gave to look for something which might serve to arm me—and the same moment the sharp steel pierced my side, and I fell backwards with the shock, carrying my antagonist along with me. The struggle was now a dreadful one; for while he endeavoured to withdraw the weapon from the wound, my hands were on his throat, and in his

strained eyeballs and livid colour might be seen that a few seconds more must decide the contest: a sharp pang shot through me, just then a hot gush of warm blood ran down my side, and I saw above me the shining steel, which he was gradually shortening in his hand, before he ventured to strike—a wild cry broke from me, while at the instant with a crash, the door of the room fell forward, torn from its hinges; a heavy foot approached, and the blow of a strong arm felled Crofts to the earth, where he lay stunned and senseless. In a second I was on my feet; my senses were reeling and uncertain, but I could see that it was Darby who came to my rescue, and who was now binding a sash round my wound to staunch the blood.

"Now for it—life or death's on it now," said he, in a low, but distinct whisper; "wipe the blood from your face, and be calm as you can when you're passing the sentry."

"Is he——" I dared not speak the word as I looked on the still motionless body that lay before me. Darby raised one arm, and as he let it go, it fell heavily on the ground; he stooped down and, placing his lips near the mouth, endeavoured to ascertain if he breathed, and then jumping to his feet he seized my arm, and in a tone I shall never forget, he said—"It's over now."

I tottered back as he spoke; the horrible thought of murder—the frightful sense of crime—the heaviest, the blackest that can stain the heart of man—stunned me: my senses reeled, and as I looked on that corpse stretched at my feet, I would have suffered my every bone to be broken on the rack, to see one quiver of life animate its rigid members. Meanwhile, Darby was kneeling down, and seemed to search for something beside the body.

"All right—come now," said he, "we must be far from this before day-break; and it's lucky if we've the means to do it." I moved onward like one walking in a dream, when horrible images surround him, and dreadful thoughts are ever crowding fast; but where, amid all, some glimmering sense of hope sustains him, and he half feels that the terrors will pass away, and his soul be calm and tranquil once more. What is it? What has happened? was the ever rising question, as I heard Darby groping his way along the dark gallery, and the darker stairs.

"Be steady now," said he, in a whisper, "we're at the gate."

"Who comes there?" cried the sentry.

"A friend," said Darby, in a feigned voice, answering for me, while he dropped behind me. The heavy bolts were withdrawn, and I felt the cold air of the streets on my cheek. "Where to, now?" said I, with a dreamy consciousness that some place of safety must be sought, without well knowing why or wherefore.

"Lean on me, and don't speak," said Darby. "If you can walk as far as the end of the Quay we're all safe." I walked on without further questioning, and almost without thought; and though, from time to time, Darby spoke to several persons as we passed, I heard not what they said, nor took any notice of them.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FLIGHT.

"ARE ye getting weak?" said Darby, as I staggered heavily against him, and gasped twice or thrice for breath. "Are ye bleeding still?" was his next question, while he passed his hand gently within the sash, and felt my wound. I endeavoured to mutter something in reply, to which he paid no attention—but, stooping down, he threw me across his shoulder, and darting off at a more rapid pace than before, he left the more frequented thoroughfare, and entered a narrow and gloomy alley, unlighted by a single lamp. As he hurried onward he stopped more than once, as in quest of some particular spot, but which in the darkness he was unable to detect. "Oh! Holy Mother!" he muttered, "the blood is soaking through me! Master Tom, dear—Master Tom, my darlin', speak to me—speak to me, acushla!" But though I heard each word distinctly, I could not utter one—a dreamy stupor was over me, and I only wished to be left quiet. "This must be it—ay, here it is," said Darby, as he laid me gently down on the stone sill of the door, and knocked loudly with his knuckles. The summons, though repeated three or four times, was unheeded—and although he knocked loudly enough to have alarmed the neighbourhood, and called out at the top of his voice, no one came—and the only sounds we could hear were the distant cadences of a drinking song, mingled with wild shouts of laughter, and still wilder cries of agony and woe.

"Here they are, at last," said Darby, as he almost staved in the door with a heavy stone.

"Who's there?" cried a harsh and feeble voice from within.

"'Tis me, Molly—'tis Darby M'Keown. Open quick, for the love of heaven—here's a young gentleman bleedin' to death on the steps."

"Ugh! there's as good as ever he was, and going as fast too, here within," said the crone. "Ye must take him away—he wouldn't mind him now for a king's ransom."

"I'll break open the door this minit," said Darby, with a horrible oath, "av ye don't open it."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the hag. "If ye wor Darby M'Keown ye'd know well how easy that is—try it—try it, acushla! oak timber and nails is able to bear all you'll do!"

"See, now," said Darby, dropping his voice to a whisper—"see, Molly, here's five goold guineas for ye, av ye'll let us in—'tis a man's life's on it, and one I'd give my own for twice over."

"Av ye offered me forty," replied she, "I darn't do it. Ye don't know the sorrow that's here this night. 'Tis Dan Fortescue is going. I'm coming, I'm coming," muttered she to some call from within, and

then, without waiting to hear more, she shuffled back along the passage, and left us once more alone.

"There's nothing for it but this now," said Darby, as retiring a few paces, he dashed his shoulder against the door with all his force; but, though a powerful man, and though every window rattled and trembled with the tremendous shock, the strong panels withstood the stroke, and never yielded in the least. "'Tis no use, firing through the lock," said he, in a tone of despair. "Blessed Joseph, what's to be done?"

As he spoke, the light tread of a bare-footed child was heard coming up the lane, and the same moment a little girl approached the door, she carried a cup in her hand, and held it carefully, as if fearful of spilling its contents: as she neared the door, she seemed uncertain how to proceed, and at last, as if gaining courage, tapped twice at it with her knuckles.

"Don't ye know me, Nora?" said Darby; "don't ye know Darby the Blast?"

"Ah! Mister M'Keown, is this you? Ah! I'm afeard it's little use there is in coming here to-night. Mr. Fortescue's dying within, and Doctor Kenagh can't leave him. I'm bringing him this to take, but——"

"Nora, dear," said Darby, "I've a secret for Mr. Fortescue, and must see him before he dies. Here's a crown my darlin', and don't tell any one I gave it to ye." Here he stooped down, and whispered rapidly some words in her ear.

"Who's there?" broke in the hag's voice from within.

"'Tis me, Nora," said the child boldly.

"Are ye alone there—do ye see any one about the door?"

"Sorra one; can't you let me in out of the cowld."

"Come in quick, then," said the crone, as she opened the door carefully, and only wide enough to let the child pass—but the same instant Darby dashed forward his foot, and flinging the door full wide, seized me by the collar and dragged me in, after him, closing the door at once behind him. The screams of the hag, though loud and vehement, were as unheeded as were Darby's own efforts to attract notice half an hour before.

"Be quiet, I say—hush yer crying, or, be the sowl o' the man that's dyin', I'll dhrive a ball through ye." The sight of a pistol-barrel seemed at last to have its effect, and she contented herself with a low wailing kind of noise, as she tottered after us along the passage.

The cold air of the street, and the rest combined, had given me strength, and I was able to follow Darby, as he led the way through many a passage, and up more than one stair.

"Here it is," said the child, in a whisper, as she stopped at the door of a room which lay half ajar.

We halted in silence, and listened to the breathings of a man, whose short, sobbing respiration, broken by hiccup, denoted the near approach of death.

"Go on," cried a deep low voice in a tone of eagerness; "ye'll not have the cough now for some time."

The sick man made no reply, but his hurried breathing seemed to show that he was making some unwonted effort; at last he spoke, but in a voice so faint and husky, we could not hear the words. The other, however, appeared to listen, and, by a stray monosyllable dropped at intervals, to follow the tenor of his speech. At last the sound ceased, and all was still.

"Go in now," said Darby, in a whisper to the child, "I'll follow you."

The little girl gently pushed the door and entered, followed by M'Keown, who, however, only advanced one foot within the room, as if doubting what reception he should meet with.

By the uncertain light of a wood fire, which threw in fitful flashes its glare around, I perceived that a sick man lay on a mean-looking miserable bed in one corner of a dark room; beside him, seated on a low stool, sat another, his head bent down to catch the low breathings which the dying man gave forth from time to time. The heavy snoring sound of others asleep directed my eyes to a distant part of the chamber, where I saw three fellows lying on the floor, partly covered by a blanket. I had barely time to see this much, when the figure beside the bed sprang forward, and in a low but menacing tone addressed M'Keown. The last words only could I catch, as he said—

"And if he wakes up he may know you still."

"And if he does," said Darby, doggedly, "who cares. Isn't there as good blood as his shed for the cause? Look here."

He dragged me forward as he spoke, and, tearing open my coat, pointed to the sash that was now saturated with the blood that flowed at every stir from my wound. The other looked fixedly at me for a second or two, took my hand within his, and, letting it fall heavily, he whispered a word to M'Keown, and turned away.

"No, no," cried Darby, violently: "by the holy mass! ye'll not trate me that way. Sit down, Master Tom," said he, as he forced me into an old arm-chair beside the fire. "Here, take a drink of water. Come here, doctor; come here, now, stop the bleeding; stand by me this wonst, and by this——" Here he crossed his fingers before him and looked fervently upwards; but at this instant the sick man sprang up in his bed, and looked wildly about him.

"Isn't that Darby—isn't that M'Keown there?" cried he, as he pointed with his finger. "Darby," he continued, in a low clear whisper, "Darby, see here, my boy; you often said I'd do nothing for the cause. Is this nothing?" He threw back the bed-clothes as he spoke, and disclosed a ghastly wound that divided his chest, exposing the cartilage of the ribs, which stood out amid the welling blood that oozed forth with every respiration he made. "Is it nothing that I gave up rank, and place, and fortune, the broad acres that were in my family for three centuries—all my hopes, all my prospects——"

"And if you did," interrupted M'Keown, hastily, "you knew what for."

"I knew what for!" repeated the sick man, as a deadly smile played upon his livid face and curled his white lip; "I know it now,

at least—to leave my inheritance to a bastard—to brand my name with disgrace and dishonour—to go down to the grave a traitor, and worse still——" He shuddered violently here, and though his mouth moved, no sound came forth, he sank back, worn out and exhausted.

"Was he *there*," said Darby to the doctor, with a significant emphasis on the word—"was he *there* to-night?"

"He was," replied the other. "He thinks, too, he fired the shot that did it; but, poor fellow! he was down before that. The boys brought him off.——That child is going fast," continued he, as his eye fell upon me.

"Look to him, then, and don't be losin' time," said Darby, fiercely; "look to him," he added more mildly, "and the heavens will bless ye. Here's twenty goolden guineas—it's all I saved these eight years—here they're for you, and save his life."

The old man knelt down beside me, and slipping a scissors within the scarf that lay fastened to my side with clotted blood, he proceeded to open and expose the situation of my wound. A cold sick feeling—a kind of half fainting sensation followed this, and I could hear nothing of the dialogue that passed so near me. An occasional sting of pain shot through me as the dressing proceeded; but, save this, I had little consciousness of any thing. At length, like one awaking from a heavy slumber, with faculties half clouded by the dreamy past, I looked around me—all was still and motionless in the room. The doctor sat beside the sick man's bed, and Darby, his eyes rivetted on me, knelt close to my chair, and held his hand upon the bandage over my wound. A gentle tap here came to the door, and the child I had seen before entered noiselessly; and, approaching the doctor, said—

"The car is come, sir."

The old man nodded in silence, and then turning towards Darby he whispered something in his ear. M'Keown sprung to his legs at once, his cheek flushed deeply, and his eyes sparkled with animation.

"I have it, I have it!" cried he—"there never was such luck for us before."

With that he drew the old man to one side, and speaking to him in a low, but rapid tone, evinced by the violence of his gesture, and the tremulous eagerness of his voice, how deeply he was interested.

"True enough! true enough!" said the old man, after a pause. "Poor Dan has but one more journey before him."

"Is he able to bear it, doctor?" said Darby, pointing towards me with his finger; "that's all I ask. Has he the strength in him?"

"He'll do now," replied the other gruffly: "there's little harm done him this time. Let him taste that, whenever you find him growing weak, and keep his head low, and there's no fear of him." As he spoke, he took from a cupboard in the wall a small vial, which he handed to M'Keown, who received the precious elixir with as much reverence as though it contained the very well-spring of human existence.

"And now," said Darby, "the less time lost the better. It will

soon be daylight on us. Master Tom, can you rise, acushla? Are you able to stand up?"

I made the effort as well as I could, but my limbs seemed chained down, and even my arm felt like lead beside me.

"Take him on your back," said the old man, hurriedly. "You'll stay here till sunrise. Take him down stairs on your back, and when you have him in the open air, turn him towards the wind, and keep his head low—mind that."

I made another attempt to stand up, but before I could effect it, Darby's strong arms were round my waist, and I felt myself lifted on his shoulder, and borne from the room; a muttered good-by passed between the others, and Darby began to descend the stair cautiously, while the little child went before with a candle. As the street-door was opened, I could perceive that a car and horse stood in waiting, accompanied by two men, who—the moment they saw me—sprang forward to Darby's assistance, and helped to place me on the car. M'Keown was soon beside me, and supporting my head upon his shoulder, he contrived to hold me in a leaning position, giving me at the same time the full benefit of the fresh breeze, which already refreshed and restored me. The vehicle now moved on in darkness and in silence; at first our pace was slow, but it gradually quickened as we passed along the quay, for as such I recognised it by the dull sound of the river near us. The bright lamps of the greater thoroughfare soon made their appearance, and as we traversed these, I could mark that our pace slackened to a walk, and that we kept the very middle of the wide street as if to avoid observation. Gradually we emerged from this, and, as I heard by the roll of the wheels, reached the outskirts of the town. We had not been many minutes there when the horse was put to his speed, and the car whirled along at a tremendous rate. Excepting a sense of weight and stiffness in the side, I had no painful feeling from my wound, while the rapidity with which we passed through the air, imparted a sensation of drowsiness, far from unpleasant. In this state I scarcely was conscious of what passed about me. Now and then some occasional halt, some chance interruption, would momentarily arouse me, and I could faintly hear the sound of voices, but of what they spoke I knew nothing. Darby frequently questioned me, but my utmost effort at reply was to press his hand. By times it would seem to me, as though all I felt were but the fancies of some sick dream, which the morning should dispel and scatter. Then I thought that we were flying from an enemy, who pressed hotly on us, and gained at every stride; a vague shadowy sense of some horrible event mingling with all, and weighing heavily on my heart.

As the time wore on, my senses became clearer, and I saw that we were travelling along the sea-side. The faint grey light of breaking day shed a cold gleam across the green water, which plashed with a mournful cadence on the low flat shore: I watched the waves as they beat with a heavy sough amid the scattered weeds, where the wild cry of the curlew mingled with the sound as he skimmed along the gloomy

water, and my heart grew heavier. There is something, I know not what, terribly in unison with our saddest thoughts in the dull plash of the sea at night—the loudest thunders of the storm, when white-crested waves rise high, and break in ten thousand eddies on the dark rocks, are not so suggestive of melancholy as the sighing moan of the midnight tide. Long-buried griefs, long-forgotten sorrows, rise up as we listen, and we feel as though that wailing cry were the funeral chant over cherished hopes and treasured aspirations. From my dark musings I was roused suddenly by Darby's voice, asking of the men who sat at the opposite side, "how the wind was?"

"Westing by south," replied one, "as fair as need be, if there was enough of it—but who knows, we may have a cap-full yet, when the sun gets up."

"We'll not have long to wait for that," cried the other—"see there."

I lifted my eyes as he spoke, and beheld the pink stain of coming day rising above the top of a large mountain.

"That's Howth," said Darby, "seizing with eagerness the proof of my returning senses.

"Come, press on, as fast as you can," said one of the men, "we must catch the ebb, or we'll never do it."

"Where does she lie?" said Darby, in a low whisper.

"Under the cliffs, in Bolskaton bay," said the last speaker, whom I now perceived by his dress and language to be a sailor.

My curiosity was now excited to the utmost to know whither we were bound, and with an effort I articulated the one word, "where?" Darby's eyes brightened as I spoke, he pressed my hand firmly within his, but made me no reply. Attributing his silence to caution, I pressed him no further—and, indeed, already my former indifference came back on me, and I felt listless as before.

"Turn off there to the right," cried the sailor to the driver, and suddenly we left the high-road, and entered a narrow by-way, which seemed to lead along the side of the mountain close to the water's edge—before we had proceeded far in this direction, a long low whistle was heard from a distance.

"Stop there, stop," said the sailor, as he knelt upon the car, and replied to the signal. "Ay, all right, there they are," said he, as pointing to a little creek between the rocks below us, we saw a small row-boat with six men lying on their oars.

"Can't he walk," said the sailor in a half whisper, as he stood beside the car. "Well, let's lose no more time, we'll take him down between us."

"No, no," said Darby, "put him on my back, I'll do it myself."

"The ground's slippier than you take it," said the other, "my way's the safest."

With that, he lifted me from the car, and placing me between Darby and himself, they grasped each other's hands beneath me, and soon began a descent, which I saw would have been perfectly impracticable for one man to have accomplished with another on his back.

During the time, my desire to know where they were bringing me

again grew stronger than ever—and as I turned to ask Darby, I perceived that the tears were coursing each other fast down his weather-beaten cheeks, while his lips shook and trembled like one in an ague.

"Mind your footing there, my man, I say," cried the sailor, "or you'll have us over the cliff."

"Round the rock to the left there," cried a voice from below—"that's it, that's it—now you're all right; steady there; give me your hand."

As he spoke, two men advanced from the boat, and assisted us down the sloping beach, where the wet sea-weed made every step a matter of difficulty.

"Lay him in the stern there—gently, lads, gently," said the voice of one who appeared the chief amongst them—"that's it, throw those jackets under his head. I say, piper, ar'n't you coming with us?"

But Darby could not speak one word. A livid pallor was over his features, and the tears fell, drop by drop, upon his cheek.

"Master Tom," said he, at length, as his lips almost touched me—"my child, my heart's blood, you won't forget poor Darby. Ye'll be a great man yet—ye'll be all I wish ye: but will ye remember a poor man like me?"

"Jump ashore there, my good fellow," cried the cockswain—"we'll have enough to do to round the point before the tide ebbs."

"One minit more, and God love ye for it," said Darby, in a voice of imploring accent—"who knows will we ever meet again. 'Tis the last time, maybe, I'll ever look on him."

I could but press his hand to my heart; for my agitation increased the debility I felt, and every effort to speak was in vain.

"One half minit more—if it's only that he'll be able to say, 'God bless you, Darby,' and I'll be happy."

"Push off, my lads," shouted the sailor, sternly; and as he spoke the oars plashed heavily in the sea, and the boat rocked over with the impulse. Twice the strong stroke of the oars sent the craft through the clear water, when the piper clasped his arm wildly around me, and kissing me on the cheek, he sprang over the side. The waves were nearly to his shoulders; but in a few seconds he had buffeted through them, and stood upon the shore. With a last effort I waved my hand in adieu; and as I sank back exhausted, I heard a wild cry burst from him, half in triumph, half in despair. One glance more I caught of his figure as we stood out to sea; he was kneeling on the beach, bare-headed, and as if in prayer. The tears gushed from my eyes as I beheld him, and the long pent-up sorrow at last broke forth, and I sobbed like a child.

"Come, come, my lad, don't feel down-hearted," said the sailor, laying his hand on my shoulder. "The world can scarce have been over rough to one so young as you are. Lift up your head and see what a glorious morning we've got; and there comes the breeze over the water. We hadn't such weather the last time we made this trip, I assure you."

I looked up suddenly, and truly never did such a scene of loveliness

meet my eyes. The sun had risen in all his glorious brilliancy, and poured a flood of golden light across the bay, tipping with a violet hue the far-off peaks of the Wicklow mountains, and lighting up the wooded valleys at their feet. Close above us rose the rugged sides of Howth in dark shadow, the frowning rocks and gloomy caverns contrasting with the glittering tints of the opposite coast, where every cottage and cliff sparkled in the dancing sunlight. As we rounded the point, a cheer broke from the men, and was answered at once. I turned my head, and saw beneath the tall cliffs the taper spars of a small vessel, from which the sails hung listlessly, half brailed to the mast.

"There she lies," said the skipper—"that's the 'Saucy Sal,' my master; and if you're any judge of a craft, I think you'll like her. Give way, lads, give way; when that rock yonder's covered, the tide is at the flood."

The boat sprang to the strong jerk of their brawny arms, and in a few minutes glided into the little creek where the "Saucy Sal" lay at anchor.

Lifting me up, they placed me on board the little vessel, while, without losing a moment, they proceeded to ship the anchor and shake out the canvas. In less than five minutes the white sails bent to the breeze; the water rustled at the prow, and we stood out to sea.

"Where to?" said I in a faint whisper to the sailor who held the tiller beside me.

"Down channel, sir."

"And then?" asked I once more; "and then?"

"That must depend on the revenue cruisers, I believe," said he more gruffly, and evidently indisposed to further questioning.

Alas, I had too little interest in life to care for where, and laying my head upon my arm fell into a heavy stupor for several hours.

The hot sun, the breeze, the unaccustomed motion, and worse than all the copious libations of brandy and water I was forced from time to time to take, gradually brought on fever, and before evening a burning thirst and throbbing headache seized me, and my senses, that hitherto had been but lethargic, became painfully acute, and my reason began to wander. In this state I remained for days, totally unconscious of the flight of time; frightful images of the past pursuing each other through my heated brain, and torturing me with horrors unspeakable. It was in one of my violent paroxysms I tore the bandage from my side, and re-opening my half-healed wound became in a moment deluged with blood. I have no memory of aught that followed; the debility of almost death itself succeeded, and I lay without sense or motion. To this circumstance I owed my life, for when I next rallied, the fever had left me, my senses were unclouded, my cheek no longer burned, nor did my temples throb, and as the sea-breeze played across my face I drank it in with ecstasy, and felt once more the glorious sensations of returning health. It was evening, the faint wind that follows sun-set scarce filled the sails as we glided along through the waveless sea; I had been listening to the low monotonous song of one of the sailors as

he sat mending a sail beside me, when suddenly I heard a voice hail us from the water; the skipper jumped on the half-deck and immediately replied—the words I could not hear, but by the stir and movement about me I saw something unusual had occurred, and by an effort I raised my head above the bulwark and looked about me. A long low craft lay close alongside us, filled with men whose blue caps and striped shirts struck me as strange and uncommon, not less than their black belts and cutlasses with which every man was armed. After an interchange of friendly greetings with our crew, for as such they seemed, although I could not catch the words, she moved rapidly past us—

"There's their flotilla, sir," said the helmsman, as he watched my eye while it wandered over the water.

I crept up higher, and followed the direction of his finger. Never shall I forget that moment; before me, scarce as it seemed a mile distant, lay a thousand boats at anchor, beneath the shadow of tall sand-hills, decorated with gay and gaudy pennons, crowded with figures whose bright colours and glittering arms shone gorgeously in the setting sunlight. The bright waves reflected the myriad tints, while they seemed to plash in unison with the rich swell of martial music that stole along the water with every freshening breeze. The shore was covered with tents, some of them surmounted with large banners that floated out gaily to the breeze; and far as the eye could reach were hosts of armed men dotted over the wide plain beside the sea. Vast columns of infantry were there—cavalry and artillery too—their bright arms glittering and their gay plumes waving, but all still and motionless, as if spell-bound. As I looked, I could see horsemen gallop from the dense squares, and riding hurriedly to and fro. Suddenly, a blue rocket shot into the calm sky, and broke in a million glittering fragments over the camp; the deep roar of a cannon boomed out, and then the music of a thousand bands swelled high and full, and in an instant the whole plain was in motion, and the turf trembled beneath the tramp of marching men. Regiment followed regiment, squadron poured after squadron, as they descended the paths towards the beach, while a long dark line wound through the glitterring mass, and marked the train of the artillery, as with caissons and ammunition-wagons they moved silently over the grassy surface.

All that I had ever conceived of warlike preparation was as nothing to the gorgeous spectacle before me. The stillness of the evening air, made tremulous with the clang of trumpets and the hoarse roar of drums—the mirror-like sea, coloured with the reflection of bright banners and waving pennants—and then, the simultaneous step of the mighty army, so filled up every sense that I feared lest all might prove the mere pageant of a dream, and vanish as it came.

"What a glorious sight!" cried I, at length, half wild with enthusiasm. "Where are we?"

"Where are we!" repeated the skipper, smiling. "Look out, and you'll soon guess that. Are those very like the uniforms of King George? When did you see steel breast-plates and helmets before? This is France, my lad."

"France! France!" said I, stupified with the mere thought.

"Yes, to be sure. That's the army of England, as they call it, you see yonder; they are practising the embarkation. See the red rockets; there they go—three, four, five, six—that's the signal: in less than half an hour thirty thousand men will be ready to embark. Mark how they press on faster and faster; and watch the cavalry, as they dismount and lead their horses down the steep: see how the boats pull in shore——but, holloa there; we shall get foul of the gun-boats—already we've run in too close. Down helm, my lad; keep the head-land yonder on your lee."

As he spoke, the light craft bent over to the breeze, and skipped freely over the blue water. Each moment wafted us farther away from the bright scene, and soon a projecting point shut out the whole, save the swell of the brass bands as it floated on the breeze, and I might have believed it a mere delusion.

"They practise that manœuvre often enough to know it well," said the skipper: "sometimes at day-break—now at noon-day—and again, as we see, at sunset; and no one knows at what moment the attack that seems a feint may not turn out to be real. But here we are now alongside: our voyage is ended."

The anchor plashed from our bow, while a signal was made from the shore and answered by us; and in an instant we were surrounded with boats.

"Ha, Antoine!" cried a *sous* officer in a naval uniform, who sat on the gunwale of a long eight-oar gig, and touched his hat in recognition of our skipper. "What news '*outre mer?*' what are we doing in Ireland?"

"My young friend here must tell you that," replied the skipper, laughingly, as he laid his hand on my shoulder. "Let me present him to you—Mr. Burke, Lieutenant Brevix."

The lieutenant saluted me politely, and then, springing up, he jumped gaily on board of us, and shook our hands with great appearance of cordiality.

"They'll want to see you ashore, Antoine, as soon as may be: there are despatches going off to-night for Paris, and they'll be glad to send the last accounts of the state of the channel."

"Light winds and no cruisers are all I have to tell them, then," said the skipper.

The lieutenant now took him aside, and they conversed for some time in a low tone, during which I occupied myself by watching the sentinels who paraded incessantly to and fro along a low wooden pier that stretched out into the sea, and formed, with a promontory at some distance, a small harbour. Their watch seemed of the most vigilant, if I might judge from the low, but continued cry which passed from mouth to mouth, of "*Sentinelle, prenez garde a vous;*" while from each boat, across the harbour, a sing-song note chanted in response the monotonous sounds "*bon quart!*" as each quarter of an hour stole past. These precautions against the approach of any strange craft extended, as I afterwards learned, along the entire coast from Dieppe to Ostende;

yet were they not sufficient to prevent frequent visits from the English spies, who penetrated into every quarter of the camp, and even had the hardihood to visit the theatre of the town, and express loudly their disapprobation of the performance.

"You'd better come ashore with me, sir," said the lieutenant—"Colonel Dorsenne will be glad to ask you some questions. What papers have you got?"

"None, save a few private letters," said I, somewhat confused at the question.

"No matter," said he gaily. "I hear from Antoine you wish to join the service here. That wish is your best recommendation to the colonel; he'll not trouble you for your reasons, I warrant you. Conduct monsieur to the quartier-general," said the lieutenant to a corporal, who, with his party of four men, stood awaiting at the landing-place the arrival of any one from the boats; and in an instant, the men falling to each side of me, took their way along the pier. I could mark as we went that more than once their looks were bent on me with an expression of compassion and pity, which at the time I was at a loss to explain. I knew not then that the road we were taking was that which so often led to death, and that it was only on the very day before, two Englishmen were shot for having ventured on shore without authority.

The *consigne* of the corporal passed us through one post after another, until we reached the open plain, over which now the night was falling fast. A lantern at some distance off marked the quarters of the officer on duty; and thither we directed our steps, and at last reached a small wooden hut, from within which the sounds of mirth and revelry proceeded. The voice of the sentinel who challenged us brought an officer to the door, who, the moment his eyes fell on me, stepped back, and, passing his hand hurriedly across his forehead, muttered half inaudibly, "Another already!"

While he retired into an inner apartment, I had time to look at the singular decorations which adorned the walls of the ante-chamber: around on every side, and arranged like trophies, were grouped the weapons of different arms of the service, surmounted with some device emblematic of their peculiar character, or sometimes the mere record of some famous battle in which they had pre-eminently distinguished themselves. Here were the long, straight swords of the cuirassier crossed above the steel breastplate, and surmounted by the heavy helmet half hid in leopard skin, and bearing the almost effaced word, "Arcole," in front; there was the short carbine of the voltigeur, over which hung the red cap and its gay gold tassel, with the embroidered motto, "*en avant*," in gold letters; the long and graceful weapon of the lancer, the curved sabre of the *chasseur-á-cheval*, even the axe of the pioneer was not wanting, displaying at a glance some trail of every branch of the mighty force that bore the proud designation of "*La Grande Armée*."

I was busily engaged inspecting these when the door opened, and an officer in full uniform appeared; his figure was above the middle

size, strongly and squarely built, and his bronzed features and high, bold forehead gave him a soldier-like air.

"Your name sir," said he quickly, as he drew himself up before me and looked sternly in my face.

"Burke, Thomas Burke."

"Write it down, Auguste," said he, turning to a younger officer who stood, pen in hand, behind him.

"Your rank or profession?"

"*Gentilhomme*," said I, not knowing that the word expressed nobility.

"*Ah, pardieu*," cried he, as he showed his white teeth in a grin. "Produce your papers, if you have any."

"I have nothing save those letters," said I, handing him those of De Meudon.

Scarce had his eye glanced over them, when I saw his colour heighten and his cheek tremble.

"What!" cried he, "are you the same young Irishman who is mentioned here; the constant companion and friend of poor Charles? He was my school-fellow: we were at Brienne together. What a mistake I was about to fall into. How did you come, and when?"

Before I could reply to any of his many questions, the naval officer I had met at the harbour entered and delivered his report.

"Yes, yes; I know it all," said Dorsenne, hurriedly throwing his eye over it. "It's all right, perfectly right, Brevix. Let Capitaine Antoine be examined at the quartier-general. I'll take care of Monsieur here; and to begin—come and join us at supper."

Passing his arm familiarly over my shoulder, he led me into the adjoining room, where two other officers were seated at a table covered with silver dishes and numerous flasks of wine. A few words sufficed for my introduction, and a few glasses of champagne placed me as thoroughly at my ease as though I had passed my life amongst them, and never heard any other conversation than the last movement of the French army, and their projects for future campaigns.

"And so," said the colonel, after hearing from me a short account of the events which had induced me to turn my eyes to France—"and so you'd be a soldier—*Eh bien*, I see nothing better going myself. There's Davernaç will tell you the same, though he has lost his arm in the service."

"*Oui pardieu*," said the officer on my right, "I am not the man to dissuade him from a career I've ever loved."

"*A vous mon ami*," said the young officer who first addressed me on my arrival, as he held out his glass and clinked it against mine. "I hope we shall have you one of these days as our guide through the dark streets of London. The time may not be so distant as you think. Never shake your head at it."

"It is not that I would mean," said I eagerly.

"What, then?" said the colonel. "You don't suppose such an expedition as ours could fail of success?"

"Nor that either," replied I. "I am not so presumptuous as to form an opinion on the subject."

"*Diantre* then, what is it?"

"Simply this: that whatever fortune awaits me, I shall never be found fighting against the country under whose rule I was born. England may not—alas! she has not been—just to us: but whatever resistance I might have offered in the ranks of my countrymen, I shall never descend to in an invading army. No, no; if France have no other war than with England—if she have not the cause of continental liberty at heart—she'll have no blood of mine shed in her service."

"*Sacristi*," said the colonel, sipping his wine coolly, "you had better keep these same opinions of yours to yourself. There's a certain little general we have at Paris, who rarely permits people to reason about the cause of the campaign. However, it is growing late now, and we'll not discuss the matter at present. Auguste, will you take Burke to your quarters? and to-morrow I'll call on the general about his brevet for the Polytechnique."

I felt now that I had spoken more warmly than was pleasing to the party; but the sentiments I had announced were only such as in my heart I had resolved to abide by, and I was pleased that an opportunity so soon offered to display them. I was glad to find myself at rest at last; and although events pressed on me fast and thick enough to have occupied my mind, no sooner had I laid my head on my pillow, than I fell into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE "ECOLE MILITAIRE."

LET me now skip over at a bound some twelve months of my life—not that they were to me without their chances and their changes, but they were such as are incidental to all boyhood—and present myself to my reader as the scholar at the "Polytechnique." What a change had the time, short as it was, worked in all my opinions; how completely had I unlearned all the teaching of my early instructor, poor Darby; how had I been taught to think that glory was the real element of war, and that its cause was of far less moment than its conduct.

The enthusiasm which animated every corps of the French army, and was felt through every fibre of the nation, had full sway in the little world of the military school. There, every battle was known and conned over; we called every spot of our play-ground by some name great in the history of glory; and among ourselves we assumed the titles of the heroes who shed such lustre on their country; and thus in all our boyish sports our talk was of the Bridge of Lodi—Arcola—Rivoli—Castiliogni—the Pyramids—Mount Thabor. While the names of Kleber, Kellerman, Massena, Dessaix, Murat, were adopted amongst us: but one name only remained unappropriated, and no one was bold enough to assume the title of him, whose victories were the boast of every tongue. If this enthusiasm was general amongst us, I felt it in all its fullest force, for it came untinged with any other thought. To *me* there was neither home nor family—my days passed over in one unbroken calm; no thought of pleasure, no hope of happiness when the *fête* day came round; my every sense was wrapped up in the one great desire—to be a soldier; to have my name known among those great men whose fame was over Europe; to be remembered by him, whose slightest word of praise was honour itself. When should that day come for me? when should I see the career open before me?—these were my earliest waking thoughts, my last at nightfall.

If the intensity of purpose, the strong current of all my hopes, formed for me an ideal and a happy world within me, yet did it lend a trait of seriousness to my manner that seemed like melancholy; and while few knew less what it was to grieve, a certain sadness in me struck my companions, on which they often rallied me, but which I strove in vain to conquer. It was true that at certain times my loneliness and isolation came coldly on my heart; when one by one I saw others claimed by their friends, and hurrying away to some happy home, where some fond sister threw her arm around a brother's neck, or some doating mother clasped her son close to her bosom, and kissed his brow, a tear would find its way down my cheek, and I would hasten to my room,

and, locking the door, sit down alone to think, till my sad heart grew weary, or my sterner nature rose within me, and by an effort over myself, I turned to my studies and forgot all else. Meanwhile I made rapid progress; the unbroken tenor of my thoughts gave me a decided advantage over the others, and long before the regular period arrived the day for my final examination was appointed.

What a lasting impression do some passages of early life leave behind them! Even yet, and how many years are past! how well do I remember all the hopes and fears that stirred my heart as the day drew near; how each morning at sunrise I rose to pore over some of the books which formed the subjects of examination; how when the grey dawn was only breaking have I bent over the pages of Vauban, and the calculations of Carnot, and with what a sinking spirit have I often found that a night seemed to have erased all the fruit of a long day's labour, and that the gain of my hard-worked intellect had escaped me; and then again, like magic, the lost thought would come back, my brain grow clear, and all the indistinct and shadowy conceptions assume a firm and tangible reality, which I felt like power. At such times as these my spirit rose, my heart beat high, a joyous feeling throbbed in every pulse, and an exhilaration almost maddening elevated me, and there was nothing I would not have dared—no danger I would not have confronted. Such were the attractions of my boyish days, and such the temperament they bequeathed to my manhood.

It was on the 16th of June, the anniversary of Marengo, when the drum beat to arms in the court of the Polytechnique, and soon after the scholars were seen assembling in haste from various quarters, anxious to learn if their prayer had been acceded to, which asked permission for them to visit the "Invalides," the usual indulgence on the anniversary of any great victory.

As we flocked into the court we were struck by seeing an orderly dragoon standing beside the head-master, who was eagerly perusing a letter in his hands; when he had concluded he spoke a few words to the soldier, who at once wheeled round his horse and trotted rapidly from the spot.

Again the drum rolled out, and the order was given to form in line; in an instant the command was obeyed, and we stood in silent expectation of the news which we perceived awaited us.

"*Messieurs les écoliers*," he began, when stillness was restored, "this day being the anniversary of the glorious battle of Marengo, the General Buonaparte has decreed that a review should be held of the entire school. Lieutenant-general d'Auvergne will arrive here at noon to inspect you, and on such reports as I shall give of your general conduct, zeal, and proficiency, will recommendations be forwarded to the first consul for your promotion."

A loud cheer followed this speech. The announcement far surpassed our most ardent hopes, and there was no limit to our enthusiasm; and loud *vivas* in honour of General Buonaparte, d'Auvergne, and the head-master himself, were heard on all sides.

Scarcely was the breakfast over when our preparations began. What

a busy scene it was: here, were some brushing up their uniforms, polishing their sword-hilts, and pipeclaying their cross-belts; there, might be seen others conning over the directions of field manœuvres, and refreshing their memory of the words of command; some, practised marching in groups along the corridor; others, too much excited by the prospect before them, jumped madly from place to place, shouting and singing snatches of soldier-songs; but all were occupied. As for me, it was only two days before I had obtained my grade of corporal, my new uniform had only just come home, and I put it on for the first time with no inconsiderable pride, indeed I could scarce turn my eyes, as I walked, from the stripes upon my arm that denoted my rank. Long before the appointed time we were all assembled, and when the clock struck twelve and the drum beat out, not a boy was absent; we were drawn up in three columns according to our standing, spaces being left between each to permit of our wheeling into line at the word of command. The head-master passed down our ranks, narrowly inspecting our equipments, and scrutinizing every detail of our costume; but a stronger impulse than ordinary was now at work, and not the slightest irregularity was any where detectable. Meanwhile the time passed on, and although every eye was directed to the long avenue of lime trees by which the general must arrive, nothing moved along it; and the bright streaks of sunlight that peeped between the trees were unbroken by any passing shadow. Whispers passed along the ranks, some fearing he might have forgotten the whole appointment, others suspecting that another review elsewhere had engrossed his attention, and at last a half murmur of dissatisfaction crept through the mass, which only the presence of the *chef* restrained within due bounds. One o'clock struck, and yet no rider appeared; the alley remained silent and deserted as before, the minutes now seemed like hours—weariness and lassitude appeared every where. The ranks were broken, and many wandered from their posts, and forgot all discipline. At last a cloud of dust was seen to rise at a distance, and gradually it approached the long avenue; every eye was turned in the direction, and in an instant the stragglers resumed their places, and all was attention and anxiety, while every look pierced eagerly the dense cloud, to see whether it was not the long-wished-for staff which was coming. At length the object burst upon our sight; but what was our disappointment to see that it was only a travelling carriage with four post-horses that approached; no appearance of a soldier was there, not one solitary dragoon—a half-uttered shout announced our dissatisfaction, for we at once guessed it was merely some chance visitor, or perhaps the friends of some of the scholars, who had thus excited our false hopes.

The *chef* himself participated in our feeling, and passing down the lines he announced, that if the general did not arrive within ten minutes, he would himself dismiss us, and set us at liberty. A cheer of gratitude received this speech, and we stood patiently awaiting our liberation, when suddenly from the guard-house at the gate, the clash of arms was heard, and the roll of drums in salute, and the same instant the carriage we had seen rolled into the court-yard, and took up

its station in the middle of the square. The next moment the door was opened and the steps lowered, and an officer in a splendid uniform assisted three ladies to alight. Before we recovered from the surprise of the proceeding, the master had approached the party, and by his air of deference and deep respect, denoted that they were no ordinary visitors; but our attention was quickly drawn from the group that now stood talking and laughing together, for already the clank of a cavalry escort was heard coming up the avenue, and we beheld the waving plumes and brilliant uniform of a general officer's staff advancing at a rapid trot. The drums now rolled out along the lines, we stood to arms—the gallant cortege turned into the court and formed in front of us. All eyes were fixed on the general himself, the perfect *beau ideal* of an old soldier. He sat his horse as firmly and gracefully as the youngest aid-de-camp of his suite; his long white hair dressed in queue behind, was brushed back off his high broad forehead; his clear blue eye, mild yet resolute, glanced over our ranks, and as he bowed to the head-master, his whole gesture and bearing was worthy of the court of which once he was a brilliant member.

"I have kept my young friends waiting for me," said he, in a low but clear voice, "and it now remains for me to make the only *amende* in my power—a short inspection. Dorsenne, will you take the command?"

I started at the name, and looked round, and close beside stood the same officer who had so kindly received me the day I landed in France; though he looked at me, however, I saw he did not remember me, and my spirits sank again, as I thought how utterly friendless and alone I was.

The general was true to his word, in making the inspection as brief as possible; he rode leisurely down the ranks, stopping from time to time to express his satisfaction, or drop some chance word of encouragement or advice, which we caught up with eagerness and delight. Forming us into line, he ordered his aid-de-camp to put us through some of the ordinary parade manœuvres, which we knew as thoroughly as the most disciplined troops. During all this time, the group of ladies maintained their position in front, and seemed to watch the review with every semblance of interest. The general, too, made one of the party, and appeared from time to time to explain the intended movement, and direct their attention to the scene.

"Let them march past in salute," said he, at length, "the poor fellows have had enough of it—I must not encroach on the entire holiday."

A unanimous cheer was the reply to this kind speech, and we formed in sections and marched by him at a quick-step. The *chef d' ecole* had now approached the staff, and was making his report on the boys, when the general again interrupted him by saying—

"Madame has expressed a wish to see the boys at their usual exercise of the play-hour. If the request be admissible——"

"Certainly, *mon general*, of course," said he, and stepping forward, he beckoned to one of the drummers to come near, he whispered a word, and the tattoo beat out, and like magic every one sprang from

his ranks, caps were flung into the air, and *vivas* rung out from every quarter of the court.

The sudden transition from discipline to perfect liberty added to our excitement, and we became half wild with delight. The first mad burst of pleasure over, we turned, as if by instinct, to our accustomed occupations—here were seen a party collecting for a drill, officers gathering and arranging their men, and sergeants assisting in the muster; there were others, armed with spades and shovels, at work on an entrenchment, while some were driving down stockades and fixing a palisade; another set, more peaceful in their pursuits, had retired to their little gardens, and were busy with watering-pots and trowels: the section I belonged to, were the seniors of the school, and we had erected a kind of fort which it was our daily amusement to defend and attack, the leadership on either side being determined by lots. On this day the assault had fallen to my command, and I hurried hither and thither collecting my forces, and burning for the attack.

We were not long in assembling, and the garrison having announced their readiness by the display of a flag from the ramparts, the assault began. I know not why nor wherefore, but on this day my spirits were unusually high; it was one of those chance occasions when my temperament, heated and glowing, had elevated me in my own esteem, and I would have given my life for some opportunity of distinguishing myself.

I led my party on, then, with more than common daring, and though repulsed by the besieged, we fell back only for a moment, and returned to the assault determined to succeed; the others, animated by the same spirit, fought as bravely, and the cheers that rose from one side was replied to by those as full of defiance from the others. Heated and excited, I turned round to order an attack of my whole force, when, to my surprise, I beheld that the general and his staff, accompanied by the ladies, had taken their places a short distance off, and were become interested spectators of the siege. This alone was wanting to stimulate my efforts to the utmost, and I now returned to the fight with tenfold impetuosity. But if this feeling animated me, it also nerved my antagonists, for their resistance rose with every moment, and as they drove us back from their walls, cheers of triumph rang out and proclaimed the victory.

Already the battle had lasted nearly an hour, and all that was obtained was a slight breach in one of the outworks, too small to be practicable for assault—in this state were matters when the sound of a cavalry escort turned every eye towards the entrance to the court-yard, where we now beheld a squadron of the *lanciers rouge* following a numerous and brilliant staff of general officers. Scarcely had they entered the gates when a loud cry rent the air, and every voice shouted, "*C'est lui, c'est lui,*" and the next moment, "*Vive Buonaparte, vive le premier consul.*" All that I had ever heard from poor De Meudon came rushing on my mind, and my heart swelled out till it seemed bursting my very bosom. The next instant my eye turned to the little fort, the moment was propitious, for there every cap was waving, every look bent towards *him*. I seized the opportunity, and pointing silently

to the breach, stole forward, in a second I was beneath the grassy rampart, in another I reached the breach, the next brought me to the top, where, with a shout of victory, I called on my men to follow me; on they came rushing, but too late, already the garrison were upon me, and overcome by numbers I fought alone and unsupported; step by step they drove me to the edge of the rampart, already my foot was on the breach, when with a spring I dashed at the flag-staff and carried it with me as I fell headlong into the ditch; in a moment I was on my legs, but so stunned and crushed that I fell almost immediately again; cold perspiration broke over my face and forehead, and I should have fainted but that they dashed some water over me. As I lay sick and faint I lifted my eyes, and what was my amazement to see, not the little companions of the school about me, but the gorgeous uniform of staff officers, and two elegantly dressed ladies, one of whom held a cup of water in her hand and sprinkled it over my brow. I looked down upon my torn dress, and the sleeve of my coat where the marks of my rank were already half effaced, and I felt the tears start into my eyes as the remembrance of my late failure crossed my mind; at the instant the crowd opened and a pale but handsome face, where command was tempered by a look of almost womanly softness, smiled upon me.

"*C'etait bien fait, mon enfant,*" said he, "*tres bien fait,* and if you have lost a coat by the struggle, why I must even see if I can't give you another to replace it. Monsieur Legrange, what is the character of this boy in the school? Is he diligent, zealous, and well conducted?"

"All of the three, general," said the *chef,* bowing obsequiously.

"Let him have his brevet; to date from to-day. Who are his friends?"

A whispered answer replied to this inquiry.

"Indeed!" said the first speaker; "reason the more we should take care of him. Monsieur," continued he, turning towards me, "to-morrow you shall have your epaulettes; never forget how you gained them, and remember ever that every grade in the service is within the reach of a brave man who does his duty." So saying he passed on, while overcome by emotion I could not speak or move.

"There, he is much better now," said a soft voice near me; "you see his colour is coming back." I looked up and there were two ladies standing beside me. The elder was tall and elegantly formed; her figure, which in itself was most graceful, looked to its full advantage by the splendour of her dress: there was an air of stateliness in her manner, which had seemed *hauteur,* were it not for a look of most benevolent softness that played about her mouth whenever she spoke. The younger, who might in years have seemed her daughter, was in every respect unlike her: she was slight and delicately formed, her complexion and her black eyes, shaded by long dark fringe, bespoke the Provençal, her features were beautifully regular, and when at rest, completely Greek in their character, but each moment some chance word, some passing thought, implanted a new expression, and the ever-varying look of her flashing eyes, and full round lips, played between a smile and that arch spirit that essentially belongs to the fair daughters of the

south. It was not until my fixed gaze had brought a deep blush to her cheek, that I felt how ardently I had been looking at her.

"Yes, yes," said she hurriedly, "he's quite well now," and at the same moment she made a gesture of impatience to pass on. But the elder held her arm close within her own, as she whispered with something of half malice—"But stay, Marie, I should like to hear his name. Ah!" cried she, starting in affected surprise, "how flushed you are; there must be something in the air here, so we had better proceed," and with a soft smile and a courteous motion of her hand, she passed on.

I looked after them as they went, a strange odd feeling stirred within my heart—a kind of wild joy with a mingled sense of hope too vague to catch at. I watched the drooping feather of her bonnet, and the fold of her dress as they fluttered in the wind, and when she disappeared from my sight, I could scarce believe that she was not still beside me, and that her dark eyes did not look into my very soul. But already my companions crowded about me, and amid a hundred warm congratulations and kind wishes I took my way back to the college.

Scarcely was breakfast over the following morning, when the order arrived for my removal from the scholar quarter of the Polytechnique to that occupied by the *cadets*. A small tri-coloured cockade, affixed to my hat, was the only emblem of my new rank; but simple as it was, no decoration ever attracted more envy and admiration from the beholders, nor gave more pride to the wearer, than that knot of ribbon.

"At number thirteen you'll find your quarters, *Monsieur le cadet*," said a sergeant, as he presented me with the official order. I remember at this very hour what a thrill his military salute sent through me. It was the first acknowledgment of my grade—the first recognition that I was no longer a mere schoolboy. I had not much time granted me to indulge such sensations; for already my schoolfellows had thronged round me, and overwhelmed me with questions and felicitations.

"Ah! what a fortunate fellow—no examination to go through—has his grade given him without toiling for it—is it the cavalry, Burke?—are you *á cheval?*—when do you join?—where is your regiment?—shall we see you again?—won't you write to us all about the corps when you join them?—who is your comrade?—yes, tell us that; who is he?"

"*Ma foi*," said I, "I know not more than yourselves. You are all aware to what an accident I owe my promotion. Where I am destined for, or in what corps, I can't tell; and as to my comrade——"

"Ah, take care he's no tyrant," said one.

"Yes, yes," cried another—"show him you know what a small sword is at once."

"Burke won't be trifled with," cried a third.

And then followed a very chorus of voices, each detailing some atrocity committed by the *cadets* on their newly-joined associates. One had a friend wounded in the side the very day he joined; another knew some one who was thrown out of a window: here was an account of a delicate boy, who passed an entire night in the snow, and

died of a chest disease three weeks after; there, a victim to intemperance met his fate in the orgie that celebrated his promotion. This picture, I confess, did somewhat damp the ardour of my first impressions; and I took leave of my old friends with not less feeling of affection, that I doubted how much kindness and good feeling I had to expect from my new ones. In this mood of mind I shook their hands for the last time, and followed the soldier who carried my baggage to the distant quarter of the *école*. As I entered the large court by the richly ornamented gate, whose bronzed tracery and handsome carving dated from the time of Louis XIV., my heart swelled with conscious pride. The façade of the square, unlike the simple front of the scholar's quarters, was beautifully architectural; massive consoles supported the windows, and large armorial insignia, cut on stone, surmounted the different entrances: but what most captivated my spirits and engaged my attention was a large flag in the centre, from which waved the broad ensign of France, beside which a sentinel paced to and fro. He presented arms as I passed; and the click of his musket, as he stood erect, sent a thrill through me, and made my very fingers tingle with delight.

"This is number thirteen, sir," said the soldier, as we arrived in front of one of the doorways; and before I could reply the door opened, and a young officer, in the uniform of an infantry regiment, appeared. He was about to pass out, when his eye resting on the baggage the soldier had just placed beside him, he stopped suddenly, and touching his cap, asked in a polite tone—

"Not Mr. Burke, is it?"

"Yes," said I, bowing in return.

"*Eh, mon camerade*," said he, holding out his hand, "delighted to see you. Have you breakfasted? Well, you'll find all ready for you in the quarters. I shall be back soon. I'm only going to a morning drill, which won't last half an hour; so make yourself at home, and we'll meet soon again."

So saying, he once more saluted me, and passed on. Not very like what I feared, thought I, as I entered the quarters, whose look of neatness and comfort so pleasantly contrasted with my late abode. I had barely time to look over the prints and maps of military subjects which ornamented the walls, when my new friend made his appearance.

"No parade to-day, thank heaven," said he, throwing down his cap and sabre, and lolling at full length on the little camp sofa. "Now, *mon cher camerade*, let us make acquaintance at once, for our time is likely to be of the shortest. My name is Tascher, an humble *sous* lieutenant of the twenty-first regiment of foot. As much a stranger in this land as yourself, I fancy," continued he, after a slight pause, "but very well contented to be adopted by it.

After this opening he proceeded to inform me that he was the nephew of Madame Buonaparte, her sister's only son, who, at his mother's death, left Guadaloupe, and came over to France, and became an *elève* of the Polytechnique. There he had remained five years, and after a severe examination obtained his brevet in an infantry corps,

his uncle Buonaparte having shown him no other favour nor affection, than a severe reprimand on one occasion for some boyish freak, when all the other delinquents escaped scot free.

"I am now under orders for service," said he, "but where for and when, I can't tell. But this I know, that whatever good fortune may be going a-begging, I, Lieutenant Tascher, am very like to get only the hem of the garment."

There was a tone of easy and frank good-nature in all he said, which at once disposed me to like the young creole, and we spent the whole afternoon recounting our various adventures and fortunes, and before night came on were sworn friends for life.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE "TUILLERIES" IN 1803.

THE life of the cadet differed little from that of the schoolboy. The same routine of study—the same daily round of occupation and duty were his. Until drafted to the particular corps to which he might be appointed, he only could absent himself from the college by special leave; and the most rigid of all military discipline prevailed during the brief interval which was to fit him for the arduous life of a soldier. The evenings, however, were at our disposal: and what a pleasure it was, the fatigue of the day over, to wander forth into the city—that brilliant Paris—near which I had lived so long, and yet had seen so little of.

At first, the splendour of the shops—the unceasing flow of population—the might and grandeur of the public buildings—attracted all my attention; and when these wore off in novelty, I could still wander with delight through the gay gardens of the Tuilleries, and watch the sparkling fountains as they splashed in the pale moonlight, and look upon the happy children who played about them, their merry laughter ringing through the water's plash. What a fairy scene it was, to watch the groups as they passed and repassed—came, and went, and disappeared—amid those dark alleys, where the silent footstep did not mar the sounds of happy voices: and then, how have I turned from these, to throw a wistful glance towards the palace-windows, where some half-closed curtain from time to time would show the golden sparkle of a brilliant lustre, or the rich frame of a mirror—mayhap an open sash would for a moment display some

fair form; the outline only seen as she leaned on the balcony, and drank in the balmy air of the mild evening, while the soft swell of music would float from the gorgeous saloon, and, falling on my ear, set me a dreaming of pleasures my life had never known. My utter loneliness pressed deeper on me every day; for while each of my companions had friends and relatives, among whom their evenings were passed, I was friendless and alone. The narrowness of my means—I had nothing save my pay—prevented my frequenting the theatre, or even accepting such invitations as the other cadets pressed upon me; and thus for hours long have I sat and watched the windows of the palace, weaving to myself stories of that ideal world from which my humble fortune debarred me.

It had been years since the Tuilleries exhibited any thing resembling the state that formerly prevailed in that splendid palace; but at the period I speak of Buonaparte had just been chosen consul for life, and already the organization of his household had undergone a most considerable alteration. In the early years of the consulate, a confused assemblage of aid-de-camps, whose heavy gait and loud speech betokened less the court than the camp, were the only attendants on his person. He lived in the centre pavilion, as if in a tent in the midst of his army; but now he inhabited the splendid suite of rooms to the left of the pavilion *de l'horologe*, as it is called, and which stretch away towards the river. The whole service of the palace was remodelled; and without wounding those prejudices that attached to the times of the deposed monarchy by adopting the titles of chamberlain or gentleman of the chamber, he gradually instituted the ceremonial of a court by preferring to the posts about his person those whose air and manners savoured most of the higher habitudes of society, and whose families were distinguished among the *noblesse* of the kingdom.

Duroc, the chief aid-de-camp of the general, was appointed governor of the palace, and it was said that the consul himself studied all the ancient ceremonial of the old court, and ordained that every etiquette of royalty should be resumed with the most unerring accuracy. The chamberlains were represented by prefects of the palace, and Josephine had her ladies of honour, like any princess of the blood royal.

The consul, still imitating the ancient observances of the Bourbons, had his *petits levers* and his grand receptions; and if the new-created functionaries possessed little of the courteous ease and high-bred habitudes of the old court, there was in their hard-won honours —most of them promoted on the very field of battle—that which better suited the prejudices of the period, and scarcely less became the gilded saloons of the Tuilleries.

Like all newly-organized societies, the machinery worked ill at first: few, if any of them, had ever seen a court; and the proud but yet respectful obedience which characterized the French gentleman in the presence of his sovereign, was converted into an obsequious and vulgar deference towards Buonaparte, equally opposite to the true type, as it was foreign to the habits of the blunt soldier who proffered it.

But what, after all, signified these blemishes? There was beauty—never in the brighter annals of France had more lovely women filled those gorgeous saloons; there was genius—heroism—the highest chivalry of the great nation could scarce vie with the proud deeds of those grouped around him—the mighty one, on whom each eye was fixed; and if, as M. Talleyrand remarked, there were those who knew not how to walk on the waxed floor of a palace, few could tread more finely the field of battle, and step with firmer foot the path that led to glory. Yet with all the first consul's pride in those whose elevation to rank and dignity was his own work, his predilections leaned daily more and more towards the high and polished circles of the Faubourg St. Germain. The courteous and easy politeness of Talleyrand, the chivalrous and courtly bearing of the Count de Narbonne, and the graceful elegance of Segun's manners, formed too striking a contrast with the soldier-like rudeness of the newly-promoted generals, not to make a profound impression on one, who could in the deepest and weightiest concerns of life take into calculation the most minute and trivial circumstances.

This disparity, remarkable as it was among the men, was still more so in the ladies of the court; few of those newly elevated having tact enough either to imitate successfully the polished usages of the old nobility, or resolution sufficient to maintain their original habits without blushing at their own want of breeding.

If I have been led somewhat from the current of my own story by this digression, it is merely that I may passingly note down some of the features of the period—one of the most remarkakable in the history of modern Europe, and one which already, to the far-seeing eye of some, betokened the speedy return to these very institutions of monarchy, to uproot which cost the best blood of France, and a revolution the most terrific the world has ever witnessed.

And now, looking back on the great career of that great man, no portion of his history can perhaps present any thing to compare with the splendour of the consulate: a long succession of victories—the spoils of half Europe—glory to very satiety had intoxicated the nation—a country flourishing in every element of prosperity—social order restored—a high position amid surrounding nations—and every thing that could gratify national ambition obtained—France stood at the very pinnacle of her greatness. Even the splendour of those names who represented the various states of Europe at her court seem to attest her supremacy. The stately and polished Whitworth, conspicuous by the elegance of his appearance and the perfection of his aristocratic bearing; the Russian ambassador, Marcoff; the Chevalier Azara, the minister of Spain, the courtier of Europe; Baron de Cetto, the Envoy of Saxony, one of the most distinguished, both by manners and ability, in the whole diplomatic circle, were among those who frequented the first consul's levees, which already, in the splendour of costume and the gorgeous display of uniform, rivalled the most sumptuous days of the monarchy.

All the long-forgotten ceremonial of a court was restored: dinners, most splendid in all the array of pomp and grandeur, were given every week; fêtes that vied with the luxurious era of Louis XIV. himself, took place frequently; and Paris became the rendezvous for all Europe, curious to behold the rich trophies of successful wars, and mix in the delight of a capital, where pleasure reigned triumphant.

The theatre presented an array of genius and talent hitherto unequalled. Talma and Mademoiselle Mars were in the very zenith of their fame, and obtained a large share of Buonaparte's favour, whose tastes were eminently dramatic. In a word, a new era had commenced, and every class and walk, every condition of man, seemed resolved to recompense itself by the pursuit of pleasure, for the long and dark night of trouble through which it had passed.

While, therefore, the court of the first consul partook of such features as those, the circle of Josephine possessed attractions totally different: there, amid her intimate friends, all the charm and fascination of French society held sway; each evening saw assembled round her the wittiest and most polished persons of the day; the gay and spirited talkers who so pre-eminently gave the tone to Parisian society; the handsomest women, and the most distinguished of the *literateurs* of the period, found ready access to one, whose own powers of pleasing have left an undying impression on some, who even still can recall these delightful moments. Such were, in brief, the leading features of the court then held in the Tuilleries, and such the germ of that new order of things which was so soon to burst forth upon astonished Europe, under the proud title of The Empire.

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